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EFX '98: Mountain Home B-1B crews test new communications equipment

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MOUNTAIN HOME AFB, Idaho (ACCNS) - Two 366th Wing B-1B Lancers are being modified to carry state-of-the-art technology to improve communication capabilities.

The 34th Bomb Squadron people will test the new equipment as part of Expeditionary Force Experiment 1998 in Florida this September. They will be some of the more than 500 wing people who will participate in the experiment - which is designed to test command, control and communication advances to improve the warfighting capabilities of an air expeditionary force.

The B-1B initiative is a joint venture by the wing and the Air Expeditionary Force Battlelab here. The battlelab will demonstrate a Beyond-Line-of-Sight datalink capability on these modified aircraft. The BLOS system incorporates numerous pieces of equipment including Joint Tactical Information Distribution System, Combat Track II, Multisource Tactical System and Airborne Warning and Control software.

The BLOS system will provide crews with improved situational awareness, improved command and control via secure worldwide communications, color moving maps and in-flight electronic mail, said Maj. Craig Thomas, battlelab bomber operation advisor.

"Crews can be 'fed' their entire mission while en route to an area of operations, receiving information from ground stations as well as from the airborne expeditionary operations center," said Thomas. "They would then be able to launch in the direction of the area of responsibility without having to take the time to do complete mission planning."

Another benefit of BLOS is that crews will have the ability to simulate flying their combat mission and conduct mission rehearsals before actually reaching their targets, said Thomas. And once in the AOR, B-1Bs with the system will be able to rapidly receive and respond to dynamic battlefield changes including situational awareness of enemy forces as well as the status of similarly-equipped friendly aircraft in the expeditionary force.

"They will be able to 'see' which threats are targeted, which threats are active in a given area and which threats are damaged or destroyed," said Thomas.

The 34th BS has developed a training program, in cooperation with Boeing, which is providing ground simulation training, to ensure crews are ready for the new equipment. Following EFX '98, the squadron will continue to refine the BLOS system throughout 1999.

Visit the EFX website at <http://efx.acc.af.mil> for more details.

(EFX sidebar)

Beyond-Line-of-Sight includes the following sub-systems:

Joint Tactical Information Distribution System provides a computer display showing the whereabouts of other members in the flight as well as the status of those aircraft.

Combat Track II is a system originally developed by Air Mobility Command to track aircraft as they fly around the world. It allows someone with a ground station to know where airplanes are, how much fuel they have, maintenance status of the each aircraft, etc. It also provides two-way E-mail.

Multisource Tactical System receives, processes and displays national and tactical combat information for en route situational awareness. It allows crews to receive near-real time intelligence data from numerous sources.

Airborne Warning and Control Software identifies and describes friendly and enemy aircraft including speed, altitude and heading.

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